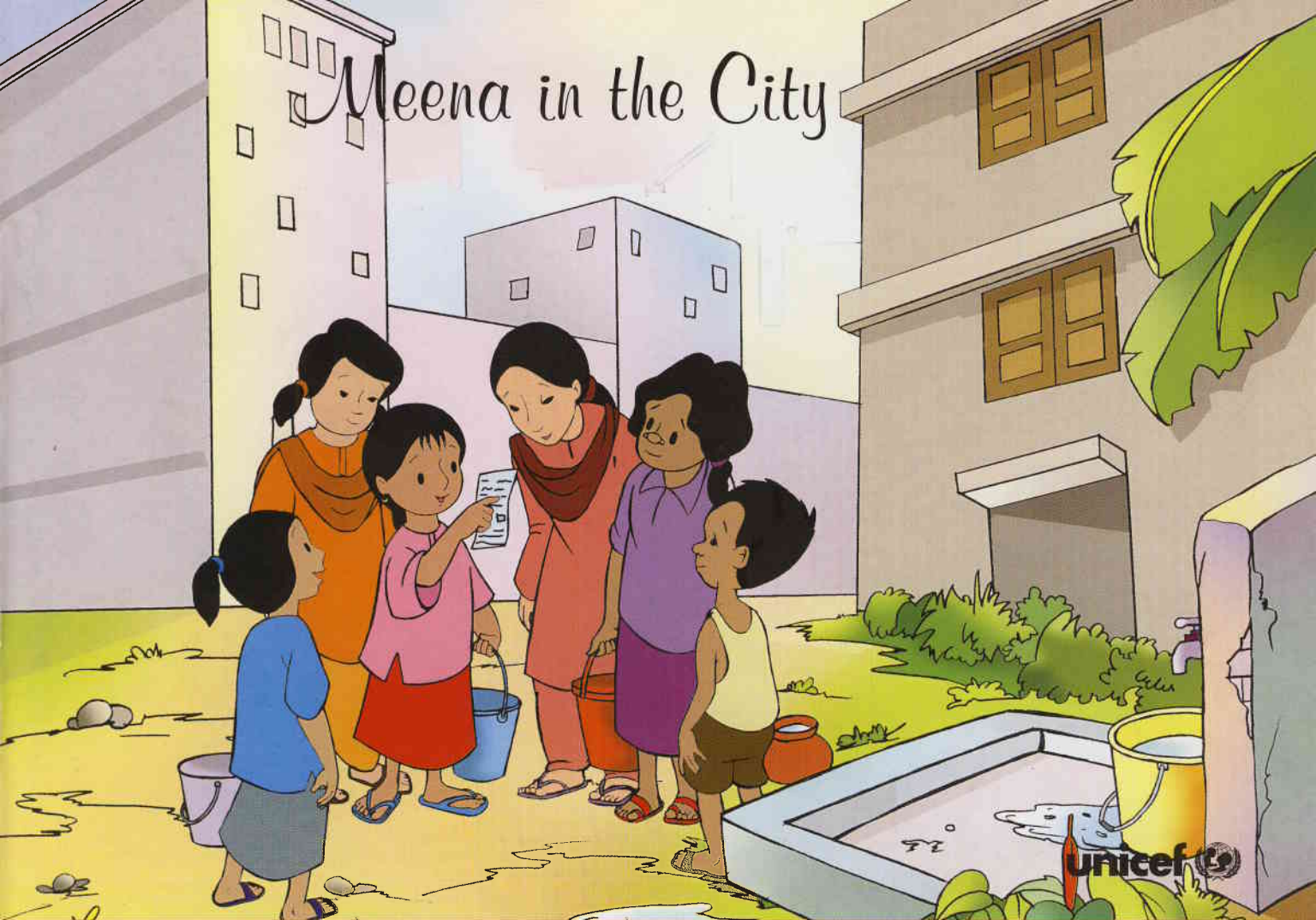
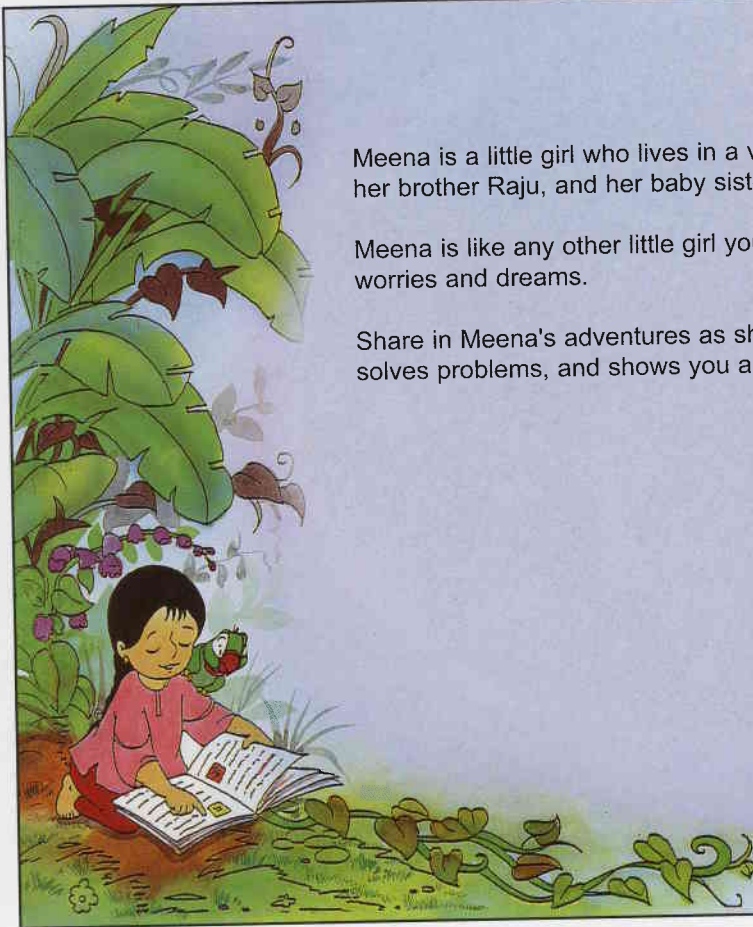


# Meena in the City





Meena is a little girl who lives in a village with her parents, her grandmother, her brother Raju, and her baby sister, Rani. Mithu, the parrot, is her best friend.

Meena is like any other little girl you know. She has the same hopes and worries and dreams.

Share in Meena's adventures as she laughs, climbs trees, asks questions and solves problems, and shows you all the things that a little girl can do.

Deepa Balsavar

Script: Rachel Carnegie  
Original concept: Neill McKee  
Comic book adaptation: Deepa Balsavar and Deep Hari

Artistic development and character designs: Ram Mohan  
Research: Dr. Mira Aghi and research teams in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan

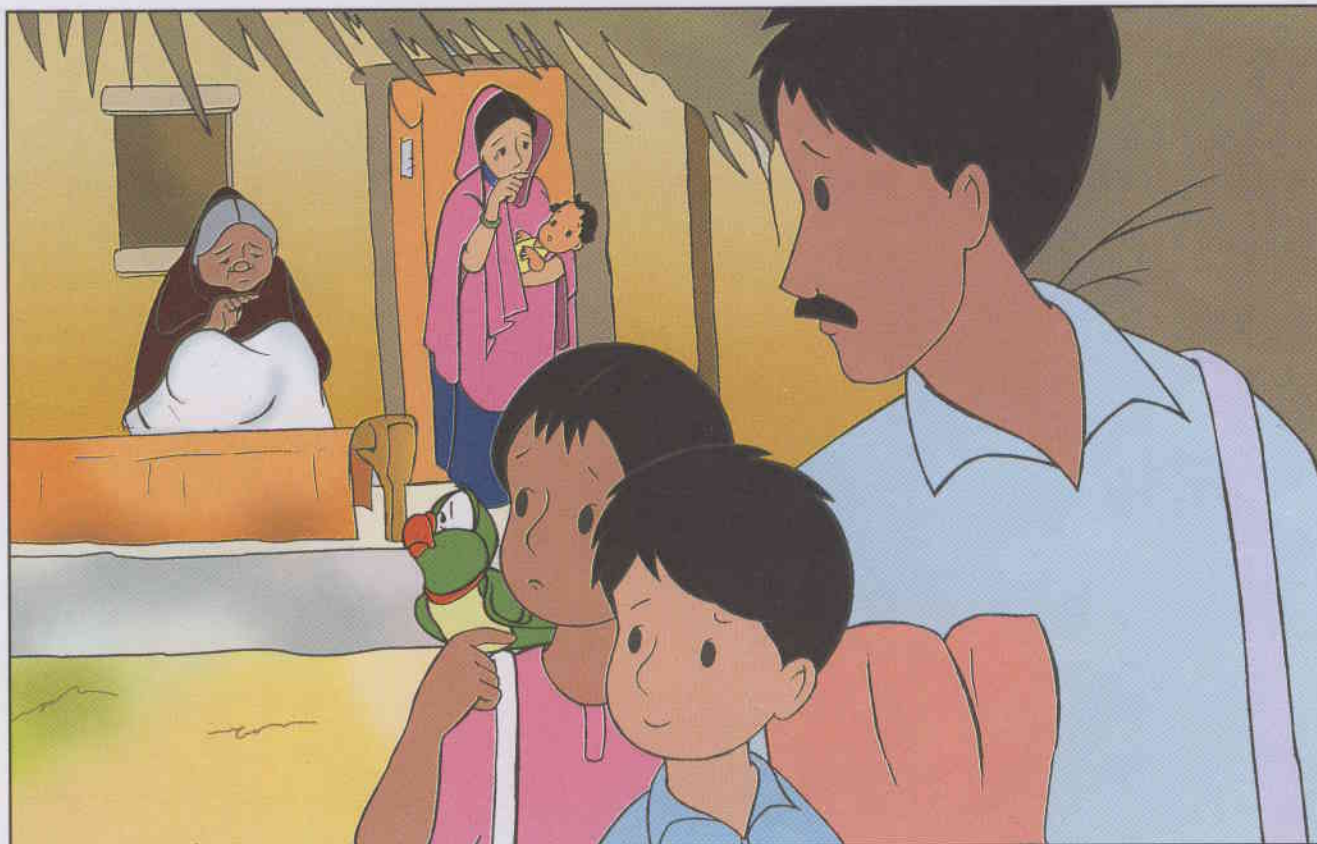
Layout and design: Harsha Mehta  
Kelvin Lopez  
Sachin Satankar  
Milind Kadam

Creative guidance and project management: Nuzhat Shahzadi  
UNICEF - Rosa



One year, there is a great disaster in Meena's village. Much of the village land is destroyed and so are the houses. Meena's family has no food or money. Then granny falls ill.





Father decides that he must go to the city to find work. He takes Meena and Raju with him to stay with their aunt. Mithu, Meena's parrot, goes as well.



After a long and tiring journey, the family reaches the city. They have to search for Aunt's new house. When they finally arrive at the right place, they are told that Aunt is away. No one knows when she will return.



Father is so upset. What can he do? They have no where to stay. He finally agrees to let the children stay and work with other families, while he earns some money.





The landlord of the building takes Raju home with him. Raju is excited about seeing a TV.

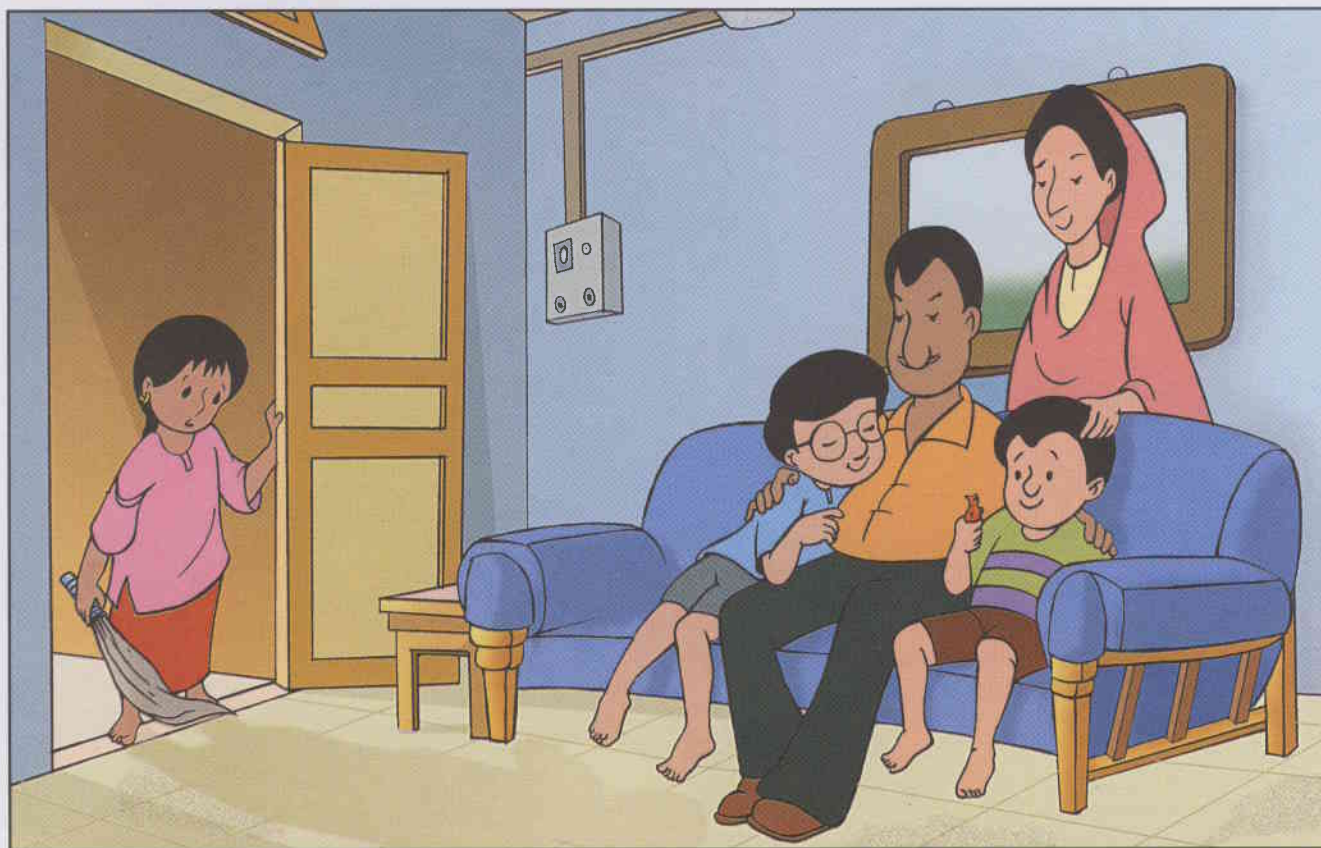


And Meena is found work with a family in her aunt's building. As soon Meena's father left, the woman sends Mithu away and puts Meena to work.





It is hard work! Poor Meena has to get up very early in the morning. She scrubs the dishes, cooks the food, cleans the floor, dusts the house and is kept busy till late at night.



Sometimes, she watches her employer's family together and feels so lonely. She misses her own home so much.



Then one evening, the family goes to the zoo, leaving Meena alone at home. Suddenly, Mithu enters at the kitchen window. He brings a letter from Raju, who is also very lonely.





Mithu sees that Meena is very unhappy and the clever parrot performs a funny circus act to cheer her up.



Over the next days, Meena makes friends with the children working in other buildings and learns about their hard lives.



Reena is fourteen years old. Sometimes, her employers hit her. And now the children of the house have started hitting her too.





Gulab is twelve. Her employers leave for work early in the morning. They lock her up inside the house all day. Ayesha is thirteen. She has not been allowed to go home to her family for over two years.

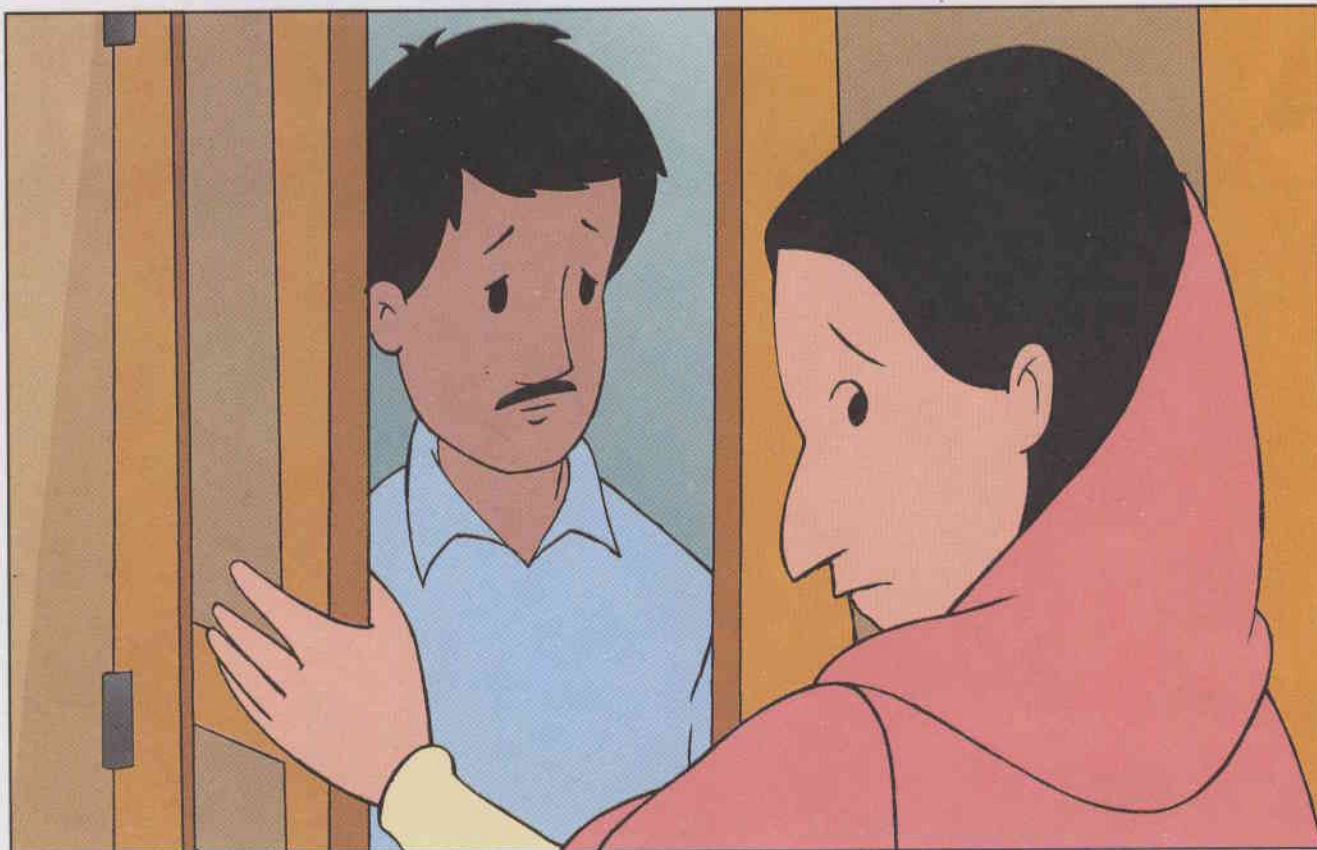


And Munna, the youngest, is only eight years old. This little boy has been in the city for six months. He cannot stop crying, thinking of his family.



Meena feels very sorry for all the children and for herself. When **will Father** come and fetch her and Raju? Will Aunt ever return from her trip?





Father does come once to see Meena. But her employer pretends that Meena is out. She does not want Father to see that Meena is unhappy working in that house.



As the days pass, Meena helps her employer's son, Pappu, with his homework. They soon become friends and Meena starts feeling a bit better.



Sometimes Pappu even helps her with her chores.

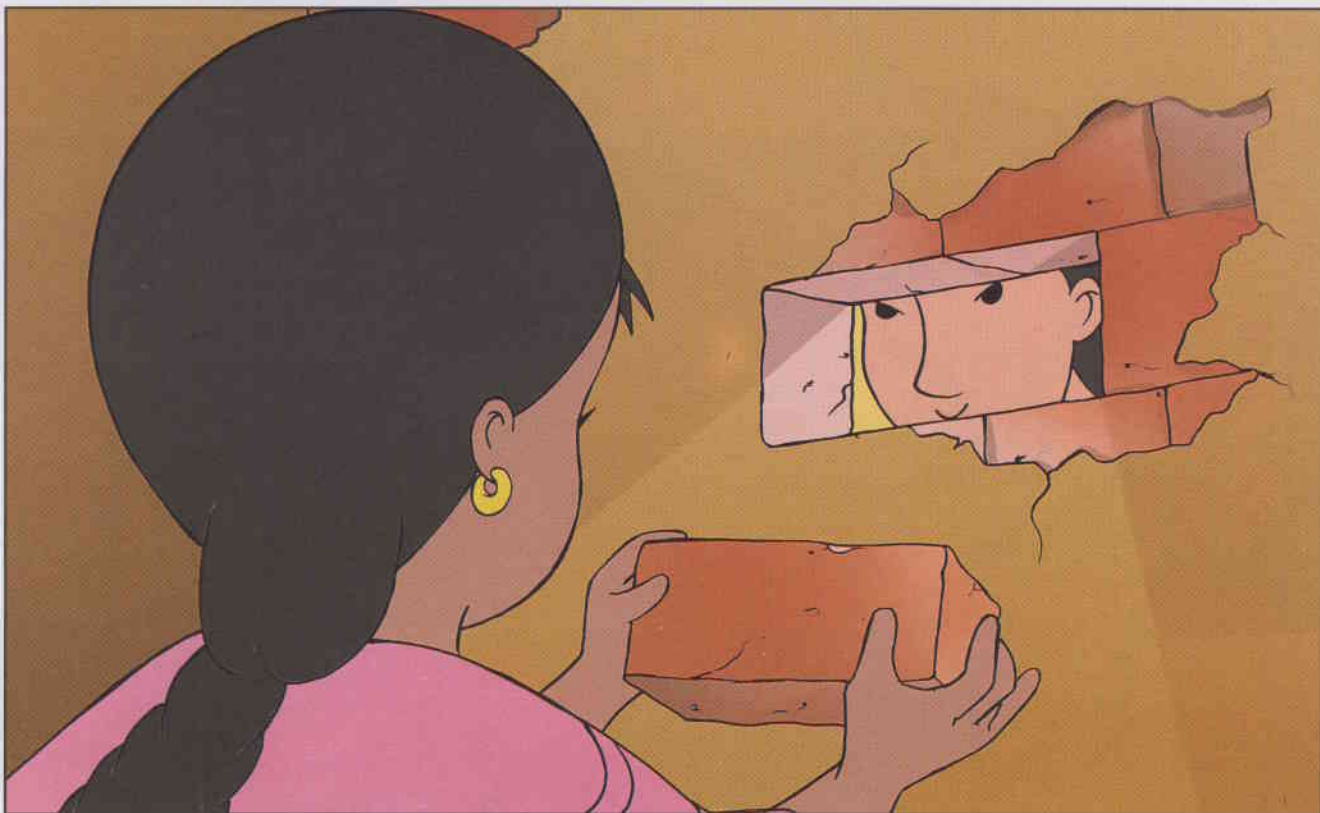




One night, Meena is reading from an old newspaper. She sees a report about an afternoon school for working children. She is so excited. Maybe this will help all the other girls and boys!



Suddenly, she hears a tapping on the brick wall of the kitchen.



Meena removes the brick and meets Sara. She works for the family next door. They are just back from a trip. Meena and Sara talk half the night. Sara says her employers are good to her but she does not want to be a domestic worker all her life.



The next day, Meena meets Sara and the other children. She shows them the paper cutting about the afternoon school. The girls are excited, too, but they do not think that they will be allowed to go. Only Sara feels that she can ask her employer, who is kind and understanding.

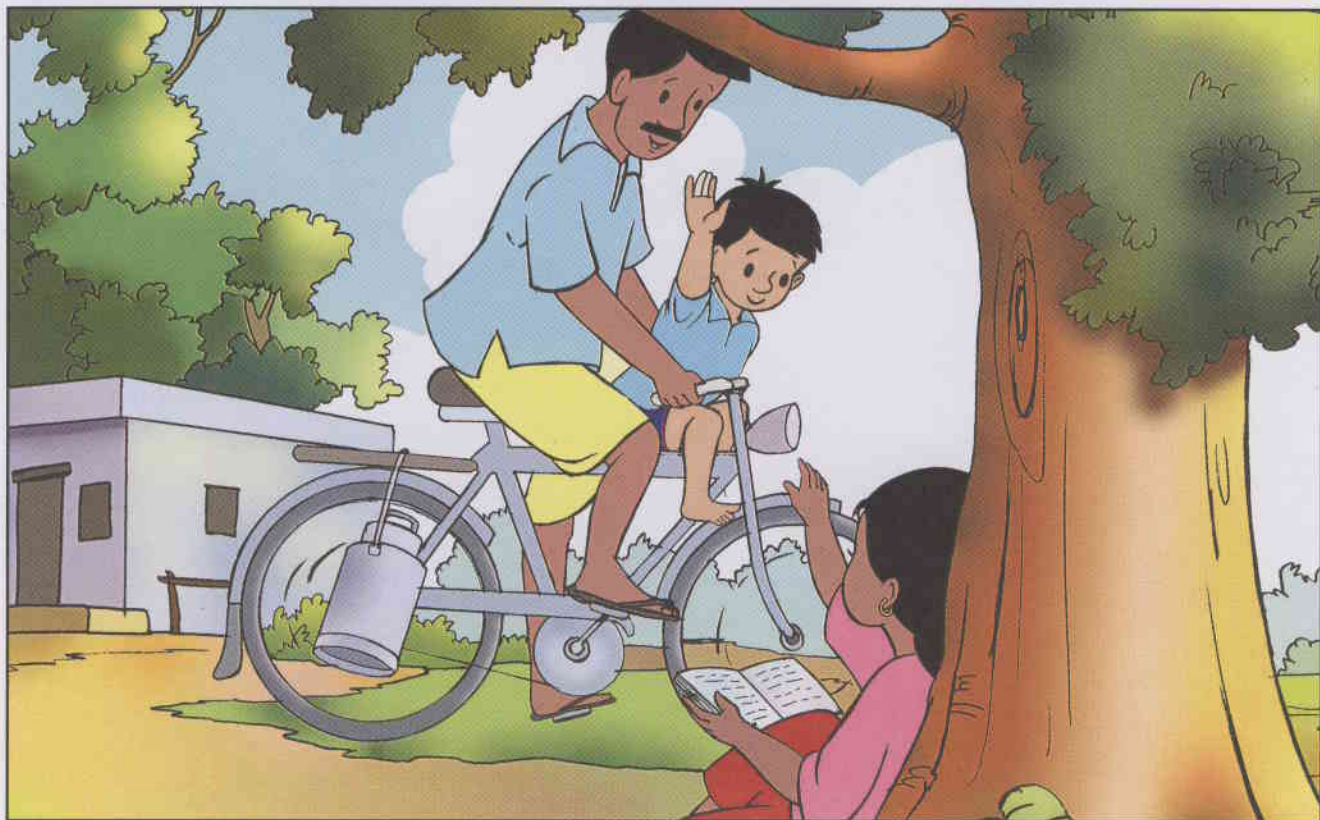




A little later, as Meena struggles up the stairs with her bucket, the neighbour comes out of her house. It is Aunt! She is Sara's employer! How surprised and upset she is to see Meena working.



Aunt quickly brings Meena and Raju home. She tells Meena's employer that it is against the law to employ children under 14 years. They should be in school.



By now father has earned enough money, so the family go home. Meena is so happy to be at home and at school again. She often wonders about Sara and her other city friends. Did they ever get to go to the school for working children? Then one day, she gets a letter from Sara.





In her letter. Sara says that Aunt was worried about her going to school alone. She called the teachers from the school to talk to the other employers. The people talked and talked. It was not easy. Finally, a few of them agreed to send the children working in their homes to the afternoon school.





In her letter, Sara say she is so excited! She is now learning so many new and useful things! At last, she can plan a better future for herself.



LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL CHILDREN.

### **Things to discuss and do:**

- Talk about the story with your friends. What did you like or not like in the story?  
Draw a picture of your favourite part.
- What happens to children who work in other people's homes?
  - They are in a new place where they don't know anyone
  - They miss their mother and father, brothers and sisters
  - They have to work too hard and get very tired
  - They do not get time to play or make friends
  - They do not go to school (in most cases)
  - They feel lonely and afraid, and sometimes sad
  - They may not get enough good food to eat
  - Sometimes they are treated cruelly.
- Do you know a child working in another home? How can you and your family help this child?
- Try to make friends with working children, if possible. If you are a working child, is there a way you can meet and make friends with other children? You can share Meena's story.
- With your friends, make a play to perform at school or in the community based on this story.
- Find out what support is available for working children. You can share your ideas about working children with your family members.

### Other titles in this series

1. Count Your Chickens
2. Dividing the Mango
3. Will Meena Leave School?
4. Take Care of Girls
5. Saving a Life
6. Who's Afraid of the Bully?
7. Say No to Dowry
8. Meena's Three Wishes
9. Too Young to Marry
10. I Love School
11. It's Got to Be a Boy!
12. A Girls' Story

Also Available

- \* **Meena Educational Package**
- \* **Video cassettes**
- \* **Radio Series**



*For details contact:*

**UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia**

P.O. Box 5815, Lekhnath Marg

Kathmandu, Nepal.

Tel: 977-1-417082

Email: [nshahzadi@unicef.org](mailto:nshahzadi@unicef.org)

[rosa@unicef.org](mailto:rosa@unicef.org)

[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

Copyright © 2002